

Edited Interview with Frank Corr in Cathal Brugha Street (2/7/2007)

Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire (MM) Frank Corr (FC)

1. **MM:** So tell us what year were you born?
2. **FC:** Okay I was born in Limerick City on 16th May, 1940. My father was a printer, and his father was a printer before him and I grew up there in the 1940s. My father died when I was seventeen and I was still at secondary school. I finished secondary school in St Munchin's College in Limerick and at the age of eighteen I did the leaving certificate and spent about nine months working with the Limerick Steam Ship Company but I always wanted to be journalist so I started writing for the local paper on a sort of a contributor basis, largely about sport and in 1959 I got a call from Tommy Morris who owned the newspaper and he offered me a job. And it was a dream come true for me (laugh). So I went to work for the Limerick Weekly Echo.
3. **MM:** Just before that the steam ship company was that clerical work?
4. **FC:** I was an office boy and then I was promoted to Assistant Manifest Clerk and this involved returning empty crates to various railway stations in England. I managed to send them I'm sure quite all to the wrong railway stations (laugh). I managed also to get my work done in about two days every week and that left the other three days for writing (laugh), for Limerick Weekly Echo.
5. **MM:** But your dream came through anyway!
6. **FC:** It did yeah and I was thrilled about it and I went to work for the Limerick Echo, got a wonderful training. Tom Morris was a marvellous editor, terrific journalist and taught me I suppose everything I ever needed to know about journalism. I as a young reporter covered everything, courts, local authorities, wakes and weddings, sport, the show band era I had my own entertainment column and I met a lot of the stars of the day. People like Roy Orbison and Jim Reeves and Everly Brothers and of these came through and I just about, there was only two reporters on the paper and a sub editor and a one of the reporters didn't turn up very much (laugh). He was more often in the pub I think than at work (laugh). So I got a huge amount of experience and it was terrific. So after about, I suppose four or five years, an opportunity came up to be also a stringer, our local correspondent for the Irish Press Group. So effectively they had a staff reporter in Limerick and I was effectively his assistant for maybe, four or five years and that widened my experience because I got to write for national papers. I got to do a lot of features for them and I kind of got a taste of the national scene rather than the local scene.
7. **MM:** And you were doing both simultaneously, were you?
8. **FC:** I was yeah. I was doing both simultaneously. I also did some freelance for other publications and I wrote some film scripts and various bits and pieces. I remember writing a tour guide of Limerick which was like this on a tape recorder and you went into the local tourist office, it was the very foundation of the regional tourism organisations and the they'd one in Limerick, the Shannon side and they came up with this bright idea that you could hire a tape recorded which was about the size of a radio (laugh), a fairly substantial thing, in the tourist office and there would be a commentary on it which would lead you on a walking tour around Limerick. So I wrote the script for this and worked out carefully where you'd go so that you'd be able to start in the present day and work your way back to foundations of Limerick, and on a loop could back into modern times again. Everything was terrific. It was done on the basis that you went outside the tourist office and you were told switch on the tape recorder and the tape recorder said 'please turn right' and walk five hundred yards and switch off now, switch on again which was terrific. So they sent it up to Dublin to be processed and in between the time it went to Dublin and the time it came out for

publication the tourist office had moved across the road so that every turn became a left turn (laugh). So if you were to actually follow my instructions you would have ended up in the middle of the river Shannon I think (laugh).

- a. So that was good fun. So I was there during an exciting period you know. 1959 to 1969 in Limerick, a lot was happening. The first programme for economic expansion had come out. Shannon was developing, the Bunratty Banquets were starting and the airport was developing. There was new industries coming in, there was new houses being built in Limerick and emigration which was rife in the 1950s had kind of tailed so by the time '60s came around it was a kind of a mini boom really towards the end of that period, the end of that ten years that I spent there. I saw big change from the time I went to work for the Echo in 1959 until I left it in 1969. Yeah, yeah, another big event was the 50th anniversary of the 1916 rising. 1966 yeah but there was also an exciting time in the show bands, the Royal show band and all this sort of thing. There was a great sort of buzz about it. Limerick was terrific because Donnagh O'Malley was the Minister for Education and then Minister for Health and he being a good local politician anything that was going came to Limerick. We got new hospitals and schools and things like that so it was a pretty exciting time yeah. So I was there working flat out really. I got married in 1965 I think but I was working pretty much twenty-four hours a day (laugh) between one thing and the other. There always seemed to be something going on and then around 1968, '67/'68 there was an award, first of these award schemes for journalists introduced by Gallagher's the cigarette company yeah and I won the award for the best provincial journalist that year. It was either the young journalist or regional journalist and I remember Michael Viney won the award for the national reporter and Paul McSweeney another great guy in the Irish Times won the award for the best sports reports. So there was two guys in the Irish Times and they...

9. **MM:** He's nothing to Myles McWeeney, is he?

10. **FC:** Em, I think he'd be an uncle, yeah.

11. **MM:** Yeah, yeah.

12. **FC:** And so (laugh) there was these two famous journalists from the Irish Times and me from the Limerick Echo (laugh) and we were all brought up to the Royal Hibernian in Dawson Street and of course it was a very big deal for me, very grand and all the rest of it and George Colley presented us with the awards. I think it was maybe my first time inside a place like the Hibernian you know which was very lavish and very formal and very, very grand. But at that particular, that particular night I met a man called Nicholas Leonard and he was the editor of Business and Finance Magazine and it was a very innovative magazine. The first time that there was ever a publications devoted to business and he asked me if I would write for Business and Finance from Limerick and so I added that to my bow and now I was writing about business (laugh) as well as everything else. And about a year later em, Joe O'Malley who retired recently, he would be a first cousin to Des O'Malley. He retired recently as Political Correspondent for the Sunday Independent. He'd been there for years. He was the editor or deputy editor of Business and Finance and he was moving to a new publication within the Creation Group so Nicholas Leonard invited me to come up to Dublin and after a lot of heart searching (laugh) I did because I had turned down three or four invitations to come and work for the Press in Dublin but I didn't want to leave Limerick but this guy was very charming, and he bought me lunch in the Old Wicklow Hotel I remember. Very impressed. I came up to see him on a Saturday and em, with my wife at the time and we came down... He was very much a kind of man about town, down Grafton Street and into the Old Wicklow and sat up at the Oyster Bar and there was a guy there opening oysters and pouring pints of Guinness or glasses of Chablis and of course I think, I don't think I'd ever had an oyster and didn't even know what to do with the bloody thing. But this was all very impressive. He took us into lunch, I remember, a large, do you remember those the food of the day, large prawn cocktails and they would come up in a kind of a chalice with ice underneath to

keep the prawns cold and em sort of a little ball of prawns on top of the thing and then you would get a great big dollop marie rose sauce and then this was the ultimate in sophistication (laugh). I remember that being (a) the oyster bar being very impressive and the other things that really impressed me or I was amazed by it was that Nicholas Leonard didn't pay in cash for the meal. He took a single cheque out his shirt pocket and signed it and to me signing a cheque without a cheque book was sort of, you know, decadence (laugh). But anyway I was if you like seduced into that and I came to Dublin. But maybe, to go back to Limerick for a little bit and to talk about Shannon airport. Shannon airport originally of course emerged from the flying boats coming into Foynes in the late 1940s I suppose. They came in around then and there was no place to go when they arrived. There was no place to eat in Foynes at all and there was these Americans coming in and they began to develop Rineanna which was on the Clare side of the river as an airport and some landing planes started to come in there as well and there was a guy in the Department of Industry and Commerce as it was then, a man called Leyden and he was quite far seeing and he saw the possibility of providing some food for the passengers who arrived because very often what would happen would be the planes would over-night at Shannon if there was rough weather over the Atlantic or anything like that. They wouldn't bother, the BOAC would fly into Shannon and they'd say it's too rough over the Atlantic tonight and we're not going to fly and they'd put all the passengers up on a hotel and give them dinner. So Leyden got this idea if we had a good restaurant manager it would be a good idea. And he used go, as did a lot of civil servants of the day, to the Stephens Green Club and there was a brash young man as restaurant manager who used look after them in the Stephens Green Club, Brendan O'Regan and they suggested to Brendan O'Regan that maybe he might think of going down and taking over as restaurant manager in Shannon. And he jumped at it because his family were from Ennis.

13. **MM:** Right.

14. **FC:** Yeah around Ennis there. So he went down and he did a brilliant deal. He got himself of comptroller of sales, Shannon and Catering, sales and catering and he actually got a commission as far I remember initially from all sales through the retail sales to the airport including the food. He set up this restaurant and as I was saying to you just earlier they devised a menu that kind of got away from the haute cuisine which would have been kind of the norm in upmarket restaurants and introduced elements of Irish traditional food. And one of the, he hired Billy Ryan then as his chef and Bill Ryan, was from Limerick originally and had trained abroad. Had trained in Lausanne and had a good track record. And he came in as a young chef and they began to work away together and...

15. **MM:** I think he came from the Royal Hibernian I think?

16. **FC:** I think he may have, he may have that's right. And I think Brendan O'Regan may have been with the Hibernian before he went to Stephens Green Club.

17. **MM:** Right, okay that would make sense yeah.

18. **FC:** So they got this thing going and they hired two waiters, Micky and Creed, the Creeds, was it Jimmy or Micky Creed, two of them anyway who were amazing characters. That's all you could say about them. Fantastic showmen the two of them and they used to dress to the nines in the white tie and tails and everything like that and they would look after all the passengers as they came. So they began to devise menus, the day Pan-Am or TWA or BOAC flew people into Shannon and they would be giving them a meal late, if they were even refuelling they would, all the passengers would get dinner you know. So it was very grand, kind of posh, kind of travel in those days. So they did a deal with the airlines to charge a set fee for the meal. Now in those it might have been seventeen and six pence or something like that but it was substantial.

19. **MM:** Yeah, yeah.

20. **FC:** And they offered them a meal of soup and maybe Irish, smoked salmon and they did stuff like Irish stew or they did Irish steak and they did this sort of way and apple tart and this sort of a thing. Irish kind of food that they would remember but the great trick was that Ryan used make up an Irish broth with pearl barley, potatoes, carrots, you name it, this great big thick soup and lashings of cream in it. Serve all this up steaming and they're all dashing to it with lots of slices of brown bread (laugh) and they wouldn't be able for a main course. You see they were getting seventeen and six pence for a meal that was only costing them a shilling. You know these great big bowls of soup. Fantastic and there was great, great stories about... Literally they would come off, there was also first class travel then and second class travel on the airplanes. The passengers would come in and Jimmy or Mick Creed would say 'second class passengers line up there by the wall, first class passengers this way.' (Laugh).
21. **MM:** Yeah (laugh).
22. **FC:** And they would get the better seats. So it developed but the interesting thing was it became one of the best restaurants in Ireland because they were serving good Irish food and it was very creative and there was another. O'Regan was a bit like Toddy O'Sullivan, he had a terrific eye for detail and another story that's told, it concerns a guy that later invented Irish coffee, whose name escapes me now, and he was buried out in America. You'd be familiar with that story. I might think of his name in a minute. Yeah. No well I'll tell you about Irish coffee in the minute. I have to think of the fellas name. This same chef anyway who was doing a dish with duck and he had duck and piped potatoes and that sort of a thing and O'Regan came in and he looked at it and he said 'chef it doesn't seem to have much eye appeal.' The chef looked at it anyway and he says 'I'll fix that for you Mr. O'Regan' and he goes out the back and got a fistful of red currants and he threw them over the duck (laugh) and says 'how's that.' Regan (inaudible) duck a la Shannon or whatever.
23. **MM:** Yeah, yeah.
24. **FC:** It just had a few red currants put on. But this stuck in this chef's mind and sometime later he was the guy now that invented Irish coffee. Sometime later he was messing around in the kitchen and he made a coffee in a glass and he whipped cream or poured cream into the top of it and it looked really very nice. And he brought it in to O'Regan into the office. He said 'Mr. O'Regan how's that eye appeal?' A new way of doing the coffees. And the story is that Brendan Reagan looked at it and he 'well now that's great, that looks very good but I've got a better idea now why don't you put some whiskey in it?' And he went out and he did it with the sugar and the whiskey and they put it on the menu. I mean that's how Irish coffee did begin and they put it on the menu in Shannon initially in the airport and then of course in the bars in the VIP lounges. I have to get you the guys name though because its an interesting thing that he, that guy worked in Shannon and then eventually em, emigrated and he went to work in San Francisco and he was in a bar I think it was San Francisco and he was working there for years and there was a big sign on the window, and it was whatever his name was, inventor of Irish coffee works here. Something like that and he died and Brendan O'Regan went out to his funeral in America and had a headstone erected to him as the inventor of Irish coffee.
25. **MM:** Oh yeah.
26. **FC:** Joe something was his name, isn't it awful that I can't think.
27. **MM:** Ah the name will come back now, we'll get it later.
28. **FC:** We'll get the name. But that was it. Now the interesting thing then was the restaurant was very successful and it became successful not only then with the passenger but with people from around Limerick. I used go out to dinner there, dating young girls. Very nice idea. Drive out the sixteen miles and of course there was no drink driving problems then (laugh) and you'd dinner out there and you know it was always very nice and the service was impeccable and there

was a kind of a cosmopolitan crowd. You know this kind of international looking place. So they then got the idea that if people were coming and stopping over and having a meal why not sell them something as well. So they opened a shop and then I think it was Sean Lemass came up with the idea of well if we're selling to international passengers they're not residence so they shouldn't necessarily have to pay excise duty and we could do a very nice little number by selling them stuff duty free.

29. **MM:** Yeah.

30. **FC:** And that Shannon was the pioneer shopping in the whole world as you know. So the thing developed in there and the Irish coffees developed in there and Brendan O'Regan did remarkably well. And then the next issue that happened was the jet aircrafts arrived and it was now possible not to land in Shannon. You didn't need your fuel and you could fly from London or Paris, some to Shannon. So they had to come up with ways of trying to encourage the flights to stop off at Shannon. And it wasn't easy and there was a whole angst that Shannon would close down and James Dillon who was the Fine Gael...

31. **MM:** TD?

32. **FC:** Yeah Minister at the time once said in the Dáil you know that this thing that was started by Fianna Fáil you see (laugh), that you'll see the rabbits running around the runway in Shannon (laugh). That's always quoted now. You know they haven't started running around yet and it's still there. But they had to come up with an idea and again Brendan O'Regan and some of the other people who were involved down there with him came up with a terrific idea. They said why don't we, they were working with people from Bord Fáilte, why don't we offer anyone who stops off at Shannon a free tour of the Shannon area. And you stop off, we'd put you up free overnight and we'll take you on a tour and you can do your duty free shopping and fly onto America the next day. So it was an offer people wouldn't refuse. I mean they sold it to the travel trade and the travel trade, oh a great idea, free stopover in Shannon and that. The problem was when they did it, there wasn't a lot to do so (inaudible) a man called Hunt, Englishman, had bought Bunratty Castle and interestingly from my point of view he restored it and he brought in a lot of really historical furniture, antique furniture. Now interestingly when I was working for the Limerick Steam Ship Company we were handling all this stuff coming in. I could see the dockets going through or whatever (laugh). And so he restored Bunratty Castle when was an O'Brien castle down in Bunratty and Brendan O'Regan said okay can we rent or borrow it and we will put on a medieval banquet in it every night and then we'll have something for the tourists to do and that's how the Shannon Bunratty started. And from a catering point of view then he used the kitchens in Shannon to provide the food for Bunratty and again it was very, they served the broth...

33. **MM:** You were saying yeah (laugh).

34. **FC:** The broth and smoked salmon and apple tart and a similar kind of thing. And of course they had the spare ribs you could eat with your hands and then they trained the singers and the whole entertainment thing and it all grew and then they built on the folk park on behind it and they had the, you know its all developed now. It's been one of the best tourist attractions and it's also high quality, it's really genuine kind of thing. So I mean there was a huge amount of innovation you know when on down there between one thing and the other. They started the renting Irish cottage scheme later. That was kind of later where they reconstructed modern versions of thatched cottages and rented them out and what they did was the did them with local communities and small villages around Limerick and that and Clare and Limerick and that sort of thing. They're still there you know. I think they've changed hands and that sort of a thing but the level of innovation and creativity and that was all there when I there with, we took it all for granted. Oh yeah and of course the other thing that O'Regan did was, he was very much a professional hotelier like himself and he recognised that there was a need, there was no where to train professional managers so he started of the Shannon College of Hotel Management which had a double benefit. First of all it trained hotel managers and some of the most famous successful hotel managers ever

in the Irish industry, all trained down there. And he modelled it on the Lausanne Swiss form of education and there was initially, I think it was a German Director, but the guy I remember Jorgan Bloom.

35. **MM:** He was Hungarian I think.

36. **FC:** He was a Hungarian you're right. Yeah but Jorgan Bloom is the guy I remember who was Swiss and I mean he ran the place very, very well and set exceptionally high standards and he had great contacts and they were able to place their students you know abroad when that kind of thing never happened. And he used to bring in, okay a limited number of foreign students to be there as well so there was a marvellous you cosmopolitan thing and then another thing that happened they operated out of a place called the sheds, we used call it. The huts and it was very basic but Brendan O'Regan then one day met a man called Bernard McDonnagh who was a steel millionaire from Pittsburgh I think and (laugh) he interested him, took him around, this guy had Irish connections and loads of money and he showed him around and Bernard McDonnagh saw Dromoland Castle and he said 'wouldn't that make a very nice hotel' and O'Regan said 'it certainly would and why don't you do it' and he did and he started up Dromoland but he then persuaded him to build a few other hotels as well including one at Shannon airport and not only that but when they built the hotel in Shannon airport Bernard McDonnagh agreed to allow them to use part of it as the hotel school. So it was absolutely brilliant. McDonagh is a very interesting guy. Now I don't know (laugh) don't want to bore you with these things. He was a bit eccentric and after he had bought, he used to live in (inaudible) and used to come to Dromoland quite a bit. And a nice story, he came down one morning and his breakfast was cold and he called in the manager. 'Who cooked that breakfast?' He said 'oh chef Murphy is on this morning' he said. 'Fire him immediately' you see (laugh). But the poor chef got fired anyway and Bernard McDonagh went up, dressed himself got into his gear for the day and was driving in his merc towards Limerick and this fella was hitch hiking along the road and he pulled in and gave him a lift and he was chatting to him and says 'by the way young man what do you do for a living?' He says 'I'm a chef'. And he say 'have you job?' 'No' says he 'not at the moment', says he 'you do now' and he turned around and he delivered the same chef back. He says 'I've just hired this guy.' (Laugh).

37. **MM:** (Laugh).

38. **FC:** Oh very, very good. But I mean the Shamon college. Do you know the background of it or not, it operates you know kind of outside of the education system here but it's highly successful. It's private. It has links now with GMIT and (inaudible) University and that sort of a thing but it's a superb college and I mean I'm just saying that because when I was in Limerick I was involved in all of that.

39. **MM:** If you calibre of managers that came out of it.

40. **FC:** Yeah, yeah, everybody. Peter Maloney, Lee Kidney, Bobby Carr, you could go on you know yeah.

41. **MM:** What's her name down in thing, down in Gorey, Marlfield House, Mary Bowe.

42. **FC:** Mary Bowe, she was yeah. Rory Murphy in Ashford. But you could go on for ever, yeah, yeah, yeah.

43. **MM:** So tell us so you moved to Dublin?

44. **FC:** Yeah I moved to Dublin then.

45. **MM:** What year was this now?

46. **FC:** 1969 and I joined *Business and Finance Magazine* and to some extent I was pitched out of my debt really (laugh). I was in with all these economists and bankers and I would be sent out to cover stories, to interview the Governor of the Bank of Ireland or Ken Whittaker or something about the economy and I hadn't a clue about it all. What they needed was a feature writer and I was a good feature writer so I did a lot of features. I used to write the cover stories nearly every week and then I got to write the editorials and then I got to do lots of stuff with it and again it was part of the Creation Group owned by Hugh McLaughlin and they owned at that stage *Woman's Way* and *Creation Magazine*, *This Week* magazine which was a kind of, you know in the *Village*, that's there now, a bit like that. *Business and Finance* and they had trade magazines and that but they were very creative and they were signed... They did a deal then with an English guy called Carr, Clive Carr whose family used own the *News for the World* and had sold the *News of the World* on (inaudible), not to Murdock I think but whoever owned before Maxwell or something who owned it before Murdock. So these people were pumping in and Hugh McLaughlin was spending it as fast as it was arriving (laugh). But they got loads of contracts and they put in a very modern printing works (laugh). They were, had a contract to print a magazine called *Men Only* which was essentially a soft porn magazine owned by the *News of the World* you see (laugh) and they were printing that but it was for export and they were also printing *Woman's Way* and there's a system called a muller system that folds the magazines together.
47. **MM:** That's right yeah, yeah.
48. **FC:** So one lovely Tuesday or Wednesday sixteen pages of *Men Only* got stitched into the middle of *Woman's Way* and *Woman's Way* was read by people who did knitting patterns and mothers and Angela McNamara used to write for it and the devil knows lot and all hell broke loose (laugh).
49. **MM:** (Laugh).
50. **FC:** I remember it was all hands on deck. We were all sent around Dublin to retrieve them off the shop. But it was a very exciting time but while I was there they launched the first, the *Dublin Post* which was first (inaudible) and then they launched the *Sunday World*.
51. **MM:** Oh right, okay yeah.
52. **FC:** Or were they in the process of it which was again very, very innovative. I worked there and I worked for a lot, I wrote across a lot of magazines when I was there and I did a lot for *Business and Finance*. So I met a guy then, I met Frank Grennan one day at a reception or something and he was a good guy and he had been in England and he was over here setting up a little business and he was, had a bought a magazine called licensing world. So he asked me would I write for it so I started doing some articles for that on a freelance basis and then he started to develop a bit more, then he gave up his own job and moved full-time into this and then he was looking for a journalist. I wasn't anxious really but I had got into a culture in *Business and Finance* where if you could get equity, shares in company (laugh). So Frank Grennan said if I left B&F and joined him that he'd give me shares in Jemma Publications. And so I did, off I went and I never looked back really. I stayed with Frank for thirty years or more and we had a little office out in Blackrock and we had *Licensing World Magazine* and then we bought a magazine called *Irish Catering Review* from Michael O'Linigh. He had set it up, Frank Grennan was working for him and Frank left and then Frank bought this magazine and it was a competitor for the *Irish Hotelier* which was the official magazine. So em that continued for a few years and I was editor of it and I was editor of *Licensing World* and we set up a magazine for the bakery trade. I was editor of them all. There was one for the furnishing industry and producing (laugh) all these little magazines you see and it was great fun. Looking back on them now they were really crappy but you know we were doing it as, it was good for the day that was in it and what happened was the *Irish Hotelier* came up for sale so we bought it and we merged it with *Irish Catering Review* and we called it *Hotel and Catering Review*. So that was in 1974. I left *Business and Finance* in 1972 and joined Jemma Publications that year and in 1974 we founded *Hotel and Catering Review*. So

that was it. I was editor of that then, we developed and we did loads of other projects and magazines over the years you know.

53. **MM:** When you started off, when you were in *Business and Finance* clearly you'd learnt about economics quite fast and the ideas of like shares in a business and that, how about business lunches or anything like that. Would you have been brought out?
54. **FC:** Absolutely from almost the day I arrived, heads of advertising agencies would ring up, the PR business was beginning to get going. PR companies or it was kind of the norm if you wanted to interview somebody the fella would say 'oh well we'll have lunch'. Now there was two principle places you went to. One was the Saddle Room in the Shelbourne and the other was in the Gresham and Eoin Dillon had moved from I think, had he moved to the Shelbourne.
55. **MM:** From the Gresham to the Shelbourne I think.
56. **FC:** The Gresham to the Shelbourne and the Toddy O'Sullivan was down in the Gresham and they were both kind of rivals if you like with each other but they were dining clubs really and lunches tended to be long, alcoholic, and heavy. And the norm would be you'd meet this guy. I used meet, a number of the advertising agencies for instance had places like Arks and McConnells, over around Harcourt Street and you'd go over there and do whatever the five minute courtesy interview or whatever you had to do and walk across the Green and your host would have booked a table in the Saddle Room. You sat into one of these booths and (laugh) as I said to you there was two possible starters, prawn cocktails and smoked salmon. That was more or less it and they didn't vary a lot and looking back now it was the height of good eating at that stage and then they would bring along the trolley with a great big side of beef on it now. I did know occasionally somebody might have say a sole or something like that but largely you'd eat beef and em they would ask you how you wanted it and they'd sliced these great big chunks of meat and em, they would have it rare or whatever and then they'd bring along. Looking back on it now, pretty awful vegetables which were generally ignored I think. Largely left on the table and you would get a baked potato in tinfoil. Yeah, silver paper and a little boy would come out then in a long apron with the tray and he would have various sauces and things like on the tray and the waiter would say would you like pepper sauce with your beef or something. Or horseradish and then sour cream would go onto the top of the potato and em that was it. Always then, I don't think I ever drank anything except wine, you know. There was Bordeaux Burgundy. Italian wine was kind of avant-garde and Spanish wine was regarded as plonk. I mean it was a very narrow style and then occasionally you might have a something like steak Diane and they would do it again you know.
57. **MM:** Would they flambé at the table would they?
58. **FC:** Flambé it at the table. Yeah they would or steak tartare and they would, you know, cut it all up and that sort of thing, or crepe Suzettes, were again a kind of big cheese deal really and they'd come to the table and they'd have the pancakes made of course and they'd have the brandy and they'd make the sauce and flame it and I think pyrotechnics were big. (Laugh). Yeah, I mean the Gresham, both of them had very similar menus really. The Gresham and the Shelbourne.
59. **MM:** Had the Red Bank shut down by this stage or did you get the tail end of the Red Bank?
60. **FC:** Up in Westmorland Street.
61. **MM:** D'Olier Street yeah.
62. **FC:** Or D'Olier Street. I did and now that was different and very, very good. I mean looking back on it the food was very different in it. They would do a lot of game, duck and pheasant and that sort of thing and they would, I remember they did eel now there. Smoked eel but I don't know whether it was Irish or where it came from. And they would also do nice desserts and that sort of thing but I suppose the place with the most, spectacularly was the word for it was the

Russell and now the Russell peculiar pen chant with aspic. They'd do everything in aspic and you'd get prawns in aspic or scallops in aspic or everything seemed to (inaudible) but it looked terrific on the table and there was different kind of colours and they also a little bit, you know they weren't *nouvelle cuisine* but they anticipated in the, they tended to do smaller dishes. Slightly smaller portions. Now they did a lot of game as well. They would do a lot. The game was very mallard and pheasant and duck a la press.

63. **MM:** Oh right like the *Tour d'Argent*?
64. **FC:** Yeah they that in Jammets and they did it in the Russell. Now I was never in Jammets. Jammets had actually closed by the time I got there but the Russell did it and they still have the duck breasts I think from Jammets down in the Berkley Court. It's a great big silver contraption and essentially what they did was you carved the duck and you served the breast, duck meat and then you put what was left into this press and you squashed it down but it was very spectacular. There was a wheel on top of it and the thing crushed down. It was gorey and all the juices flowed out into a little bowl and then they put brandy and cream and that and you'd make your sauce and that sort of thing you know. But again it was all done at the table. All done at the table, yeah, yeah and...
65. **MM:** Now when you arrived now, like you say you never got to eat in Jammets were these people talking about Jammets or would they be comparing?
66. **FC:** Jammets had just gone.
67. **MM:** '67 I think Jammets shut.
68. **FC:** Yeah.
69. **MM:** So it wouldn't be long closed before you came.
70. **FC:** It was just before I arrived and they used to talk, I heard it talked about but I only came you seen in '69 so I just missed it and so as I said the Russell, the Hibernian, the Shelbourne and the Gresham, four hotels now when you think of it were and the Red Bank would have been a very popular.
71. **MM:** What about the Unicorn at this stage? Was the Unicorn up to anything at that time?
72. **FC:** I think it came a little bit later.
73. **MM:** Right, yeah. I went through different ownerships and I haven't fully figured it out yet myself.
74. **FC:** And I'll tell you another place that started to come on stream, and we used to go there because it was great for seafood, the Lord Edward. And that became very popular and that was, a slightly younger crowd would frequent it and the guys who wanted some dinner, they specialised in you know crab legs and scallops and prawns and that sort of thing. Also sole and plaice and that but it had a very good name as a fish restaurant.
75. **MM:** That came, the minute the Red Bank shut down, the chef and waiters (inaudible) that opened up something like four or five months after the Red Bank with the same crew nearly.
76. **FC:** Very, very (inaudible) too, yeah. I mean it would have been later than Snaffles.
77. **MM:** Yeah Snaffles yeah, I'm looking at that time as is from where I see it you know. Again I wasn't there to remember it as such but from what I see it is that Snaffles was up in Leeson Street. Well you had Mike Butt started in the later '50s or something like that.

78. **FC:** Mike Butt was there when I arrived and he was exceptionally unusual in that his was an Indian restaurant, the Golden Orient was upstairs and the Tandoori Rooms was below. Now there were two Indian restaurants and one was cheaper and one was dearer than the other and they were desperately unusual in so far as they were acceptable to kind of people who would go to other fine dining restaurant if you know what I mean. It was Indian food and nobody knew anything about Indian food. And only was it not Indian food, Indian food with a South African twist as Mike was South African, he was Indian. He came here via South Africa. So a lot of the cooking, there was marinade dishes and that sort of a thing you know and again it had a kind of a Indian décor and atmosphere and that sort of way but interestingly though all his staff were Irish. It was just himself that was Indian and his wife was as Dublin as Dublin could be.

79. **MM:** Kenya (inaudible) yeah.

80. **FC:** Yeah that was a nice place to go yeah.

81. **MM:** And so around that time from what I understand say Snaffles opened in Leeson Street and they had another place called the Soup Bowl I think. Peter Powrie or something like that.

82. **FC:** Peter Powerie that's right. Now they were of a later, they were '74.

83. **MM:** Late '70s ah right yeah.

84. **FC:** '74 or '75 onwards. I would say I was in the Hotel and Catering Review when they came on the scene and taste had become a lot more sophisticated. All of it, within that period, maybe five years the carved beef at the table had fallen into kind of disfavour and you know new French type of cooking, you know had become popular.

85. **MM:** Now would this be the effect of Gault & Milau and *Nouvelle Cuisine*. I think it was 1974 when they wrote the famous piece.

a. (End of side A)

86. **FC:** A little bit later.

87. **MM:** In France it was '74 I think, they wrote a famous article but you would take a little time then to trickle to Ireland I'd say but...

88. **FC:** But the first guy was Declan Ryan in Cork in the Arbutus Lodge. Em, he was the first guy I came across that had studied Michel Guérard, you know the French guy and had looked very much at the visual aspect of food and started...

89. **MM:** He actually worked with Troisgros Brothers.

90. **FC:** He did, Declan?

91. **MM:** He trained in the Russell and then he said where's the best thing happening in France and he went and he worked with the Troisgros Brothers in Roanne.

92. **FC:** And the Arbutus Lodge was the pioneer of that kind of cooking, ever before Patrick Guilbaud or anybody came and it, ones like Snaffles now were in a transition period, do you know what I mean. They were pre nouvelle cuisine but what they started to do was to introduce you know wet dishes to the menu and I mean doing casseroles and that sort of a thing. They would have been kind of unheard of you know in the more traditional kind of places. Em, and they also they began to do, you know they were also into game and into, duck became very fashionable but they were inclined to do it in different ways and sell duck breasts rather than half ducks and they'd

lots of things like that and they made quite a name for themselves and I mean the food was very, very good.

93. **MM:** Nicholas Tinne is it?

94. **FC:** Nicholas Tinny that's right. Lovely fella and...

95. **MM:** As far as I know there's a link there as well with the Red Bank that some of the guys from the Red Bank went there.

96. **FC:** Did they?

97. **MM:** The original owner, the Tinne were inherited it from the, I think Fitzgeralds or something were the original owner. They were wine people or something.

98. **FC:** That's right. They became Fitzgerald Finlater and then... Do you know who worked for them? Richard Burrows whose now the chief executive of Pernod Ricard. He worked for Fitzgeralds yeah. Had a little place over, I think that you can still see the name over in D'Olier Street where there's little offices over there. Gilbeys were over there too in those days yeah.

99. **MM:** How about I was just thinking now, roughly around that time what you had is you had some chef proprietors open up. You had you know Mervyn Stewart, you had...

100. **FC:** Lets try and look at that. I suppose Sean Kinsella was the first guy who was a chef proprietor really to make an impact out in the Mirabeau and it was a con job. It was dreadful.

101. **MM:** I believe the food wasn't anything special but the whole thing was that it became a club or something like that. It was so expensive that it kept the wealthy in and anyone else out sort of thing. That was it?

102. **FC:** He started out with a real exclusivity sort of thing and he never gave you a itemised bill, you got a piece of paper with a figure written on it and it was usually enough to shock you but you know you paid it. He put out the story that if you queried a bill he tore it up but he didn't tear it up very often. He had been on the ships, he was a chef on a cruise liner and essentially he was a very good marketing man and he was able to suss exactly what people wanted and what people wanted was largely unadulterated good food so he would buy the best Dublin bay prawns and you could buy them then. He used pay good money for them and literally peel them and boil them and serve them with a little bit sauce on the side but beautiful Dublin bay prawns and nothing wrong with a bit of salad. He's main courses were only steak and duck, that was really it. You could put in an oven full of ducks at the start of the night and he'd sell most of them I'm sure before the end of the night. There was nothing special about them, there was (inaudible), they weren't particularly good but they were nice duck and he bought in all his desserts, apple tarts and this. As a matter of fact when he went bust, Cavistons were his biggest creditors you know. You know he used buy in everything. So he, but what he did then was (laugh) he then decorated this place in what was probably the worse possible kitch you could imagine and I mean it was marketry and china dolls and gaudy pictures. I mean it was awful and banquets around the sign and low lighting but he was a charming, wonderful host. He had a beard, a big fat guy and he looked like a chef and bring people in and you know look after them sort of thing and what happened was that he was really the only one doing anything like that in Dublin and people beat a path to his door. I mean he happened to come at a time when mohair suits and Fianna Fáil and builders, you know it was the beginning of all that and there was people with loads of money and they didn't care and they went out and he treated them like royalty and he bought a Rolls Royce which he used keep parked outside the door and he'd drive you home in it and he'd give the ladies a bottle of cheap plonk, a bottle of wine going home. But I mean lashing it on the bill. The interesting thing was everything was in such bad taste but yet it worked a dream you know.

- 103.MM: And is it because people just didn't know any better?
- 104.FC: They didn't know any better.
- 105.MM: Was this sort of new money sort of thing was it?
- 106.FC: Absolutely, they didn't know any better and also they wouldn't dream of eating the kind of food like certainly not *nouvelle cuisine* but even the stuff that was becoming popular in the more *avant garde* restaurants you know like the Soup Bowl and that sort of thing would be much too complicated, they wanted a fine beef steak, a big bowl of prawns and they looked after them and some heavy red wine and brandies afterwards and you know maybe be driven home or something like that. It was costing them in those days a £100 a meal you know. I mean he was just amazing but you know he was typical of the time I suppose but I always, we had an office just around the corner. I always felt that he was a con man. Never had an awful time but he used to generate a huge amount of publicity you know. Meanwhile like you had these chefs coming on, Mervyn was among the first, he's been there for quite a long time.
- 107.MM: I think Mervyn and Aidan McManus I think opened up around the same time.
- 108.FC: Interesting two different sides of the bay and Mervyn would be more influenced by Sean Kinsella now (laugh) and Aidan you know as was influenced by... Well Aidan was just a guy who cooked good fish fairly simply really. Again built himself a nice kind of business. The other guy was John Howard and John Howard started the *Le Coq Hardi* inside in the...
- 109.MM: Pembroke Street.
- 110.FC: No that pub yeah.
- 111.MM: Was it the Lansdowne Hotel or something?
- 112.FC: It was the Lansdowne Hotel then yeah and he was in a kind of a little back room in there and he had come up, he was a chef I think in the Shelbourne was he or the Gresham but anyway he had won a few prizes.
- 113.MM: Was he down in Wexford for a while, I think in Whites or something like that?
- 114.FC: Originally he was in Whites that's right and then he was up here and then he won prizes in Hotelympia and then he started out in the *Coq Hardi* you know. Just up the road from where he ended up but he started doing interesting things then. I mean he started doing things like kidneys and brains and you get all strange food in there and he was very good for his day particularly when he was young and he was making a real kind of effort and the cooking was very quite advanced for the Dublin of the day. He tended to go towards heavier type of thing and he tended to have a fair amount of kind traditional dishes and that sort of thing as well but I remember him doing really good lamb and very good as I said offal. He was very, very good with offal and he picked up quite a lot of knowledge about French cooking. I mean he wouldn't have been at all *avant garde*, he wouldn't have been at all in the *nouvelle cuisine* school. He followed the Escofier yeah very much so. But you know that's where the market was too and he had a huge following right up to the time he moved and he had a huge following largely of people who enjoyed good old fashioned eating you know. He never moved a lot from when he set-up first. You know I don't think he developed an awful lot but he was very successful, very successful.
- 115.MM: Was he always considered to be expensive?
- 116.FC: He was yeah. Well in the first couple of years maybe not quite as expensive as he was in the past later on. When he was trying to make a name for himself you know you could go there without being a banker (laugh) you know yeah. But gradually you of course he developed a more

upmarket client and he moved clientele and moved down and became more expensive then yeah. Not quite as expensive I think at the start but he was always kind of slightly upmarket I suppose.

117.MM: When does Ernie Evans come into the picture?

118.FC: Well Ernie Evans made his name down in Waterville as you know and he's from around there and he had a guesthouse initially and then started to cook and very talented cook and made his name by cooking fresh seafood that he was able to get in plentiful supply and Charlie Chaplin used spend his holidays down there and he was a great customer of Ernies' and then you remember they made Ryan's Daughter and a lot of celebrities started to hang out and he had a good flair for publicity and so he became a kind of national figure. And the place down in Waterville was a huge success there's no doubt about it and he had various problems, you know he had drink problems, he had personal problems, family problems, the devil knows what and eventually he fell on hard times down there. One of the recessions or other and there wasn't as many celebrities around and there wasn't as much money down in Kerry so he moved up to Dublin and he opened a place in Donnybrook and he had acquired a lot of the art that's in there when he was down in Kerry and he brought all that up to Dublin and you know continued on. He was a kind of if you like a continuation of that kind of old school tradition as well.

119.MM: So that was more the Escoffier thing as well.

120.FC: It was yeah.

121.MM: Traditional food?

122.FC: Style of cooking would have very influenced by *haute cuisine*. Very, very, lots of creamy sauces and lots of big meals, big heavy kind of meals and that sort of thing, yeah, Pates and stuffing and you know all sort of cholesterol loaded food yeah, yeah but meanwhile I mean Declan Ryan became the pioneer and then you see the other pivotal change was Myrtle Allen and I mean she had a farm and developed, started to take guests and decided well maybe she should feed them and never strayed outside her own farm in her feeding of them she went and picked the blackberries off the hedgerows and made apple tarts and she went out and collected the hens eggs and her husband was a farmer and they had their own cattle which they got slaughtered. They used their own meat. They used smoke their own bacon. She then, she started getting neighbours to help out. They used to have mackerel up chimneys and things like. They had their own smoked mackerel and seafood and she had, she'd a great flair for just the traditional Irish wholesome peasant cooking if you like although her own I mean it was far from peasant she was reared. She was kind of a west Brit, west Cork type of woman.

123.MM: And she was educated in a private school in England.

124.FC: Well to do come gentlemen farmers kind of thing. But she hit on a good thing and she messianic about it and I mean she really did revolutionise the whole approach to cooking, professional cooking and eating largely by using the best of Irish raw materials and she gave inspired a whole generation and the next whole generation of chefs as well as organic you know artists and food producers and the lot so her influence is immense.

125.MM: There is no doubt about it yeah.

126.FC: Absolutely yeah and I mean she was articulate too and could talk about it and then of course Darina came along and she developed it further with the school and the cookery books and the television programmes. But it was really Myrtle that made that particular breakthrough and I mean an awful lot of what she did what some of the famous signature chefs of today are doing that she went back to her own roots and started cooking the food that her mother and grandmother used to cook you know.

- 127.MM: There was a growth at that period now in the mid, early to mid '70s of the country house hotel then.
- 128.FC: There was yeah.
- 129.MM: Ballylickey was doing really good food.
- 130.FC: It was in West Cork. Longueville in Mallow would have been one of the first as well. I suppose it was nearly into the '80s when they really began to emerge. There was one period in the '70s when there wasn't much happening but there was I suppose some of them did get going in the '70s largely because they couldn't pay the upkeep of their houses and they started to take in guests. And you know a lot of it grew from there and eventually... Longueville was probably the O'Callaghan's down in Mallow were probably the pioneers I suppose in lots of ways. They had a beautiful house and they started welcoming guests in there and they started growing their own vegetables and that sort of thing.
- 131.MM: The other one down next to them, Assola's yeah.
- 132.FC: Another lovely one yeah. A lot of them were kind of gathered the kind of Cork and Kerry kind of area initially.
- 133.MM: But you mentioned earlier on about the Dromolands, this fella buying Dromoland, now what was the food like? When did Drumoland and then later on then Ashford Castle, when did they become sort of associate with sort *haute cuisine*?
- 134.FC: Well from the very beginning Bernard McDonagh has set a very high quality restaurant in Dromoland and used chefs either that had gone through Shannon School or that he had brought in you know from America and the food initially in Dromoland again was *haute cuisine* influenced, there's no doubt in that kind of tradition. Although, it was also influenced by the type of food that was served in the Shannon airport and that. They began to put a spin on it yeah and the food was always very, very good. Ashford was owned then by then that other guy, was the fella that owned Ashford before, Mulcahy, John Mulcahy. He was a Irish American as well and he set up a golf course down in Kerry and again you know he again the food was kind of old fashioned, there's no doubt about it, it still is, still is. Dromoland is more modern now I think alright but they hired some very good chefs over the years.
- 135.MM: I remember Rolland, (inaudible) Roland, Henri worked in Dromoland or Ashford at one stage.
- 136.FC: I think he was in Dromoland.
- 137.MM: Do you remember his restaurant in Killarney. Henri, it was called Rolland?
- 138.FC: Rolland yeah, yeah. Well originally that's the son, the father worked in Sh
- 139.MM: No the father worked in the Russell.
- 140.FC: In the Russell and when the Russell closed went I think to work in Shannon.
- 141.MM: I thought he went to France.
- 142.FC: Did he unless I'm mixing him up with somebody else now. I'm not too sure about that. Maybe I am. There's another French guy I'm trying to think of now.
- 143.MM: I tell you who you might be thinking of there was a fella, I tell you who you might be thinking about. The son has a place in Limerick at the moment and Michel Treyvaud.

- 144.FC: Treyvaud that's right, yeah, yeah.
- 145.MM: Actually just talking about Treyvaud, because there's two things there that we sort of skipped over and that was there was a change when the Intercontinental Hotel opened up that was '70...
- 146.FC: No that was before I left Limerick. 1965/1966.
- 147.MM: Oh right okay. So by the time you came to Dublin Jury's had taken over there.
- 148.FC: Oh no it was it was Intercontinental. What happened was Sean Lemass was, actually it wasn't just Sean Lemass, it was Tim O'Driscoll who was in Bord Fáilte was anxious to try and attract an American brand, hotel brand to Ireland because Americans would be more familiar. The Intercontinental was just getting going and it was owned by Pan-Am so there was strong connections between Pan-Am and Ireland and Sean Lemass persuaded to come to Ireland and it was interesting. The site, the gardens there is Blackrock owned by I think veterinary college or something like that. They were offered that site and there was a tender I think put out for it but Toddy O'Sullivan found out about it in the Gresham and he bid for it and actually I think bought it and then about a week or something before and then it was sold on to Intercontinental. So he did a good deal, a fairly good deal on it but it was a key site but Lemass was very anxious to attract Americans into Limerick and the south so he offered the site to Intercontinental on the condition that they build a hotel in Limerick and a hotel in Cork which were the two Jury's. But they did but somewhat reluctantly and the two hotels they put up were only thrown up really but they were still kind of, you know they were the first branded hotels. They were Americans. They were run by American originally and then the Irish staff came in and that sort of a thing. Now in Dublin they didn't introduce anything particularly great in the food or anything like that but they did include the first real late night restaurant in the coffee dock.
- 149.MM: Okay, yeah.
- 150.FC: Where you could have burgers and snack meal.
- 151.MM: Like an American diner sort of thing?
- 152.FC: An American diner kind of thing. And the other thing they introduced was a supper room in the Martello room in Ballsbridge and they put Jim Doherty who played the band and they had this little trio sort of playing jazzy music every night. Lovely restaurant looking out over Ballsbridge, real romantic and that was the first of its kind and it was the nearest thing there was to a nightclub even though it wasn't a nightclub in the current...
- 153.MM: Would there have been dancing as well?
- 154.FC: Yeah nice little waltzing and fox trots and that sort of thing and people out to dinner and that sort of thing and it wasn't exuberantly priced, you would go there for your birthday or wedding anniversary that sort of a thing you know. I think it might have been five guineas or something like but I mean I know that it wasn't outrageously priced yeah. As a matter of fact if you look at that particular era apart from Sean Kinsella dining out was reasonably priced you know. Now I think when ones like the Soup Bowl and that came along maybe they pushed up prices a little bit and the Hibernian and the Russell would have been expensive really. Ah it would really I suppose, yeah.
- 155.MM: There was one there, The Celtic Mews?
- 156.FC: Yeah. Joe Gray. Yes that's where L'Ecrivain is. He was a hotel manager and he set up around 1978 or 1980 and he got a reputation, he wasn't a chef himself but he got a reputation for

serving good food, there's no doubt about it yeah. And it was a very successful restaurant but he died very young and his sons are still involved now I think with Lemongrass.

157.MM: Oh is that the sons. Oh right okay. That makes sense yeah.

158.FC: And the son was involved in something else as well.

159.MM: He'd nothing do with the Grey Door?

160.FC: No the Grey Door was Barry Wise and PJ Daly and that opened in the 1980s and it was a Russian restaurant and the reason it was a Russian restaurant they brought over a chef called Eamon Walsh, an Irish fella but he had been a chef in Finland. He had a Finnish wife. He came over and he started doing the Finnish version of Russian food (laugh). But they couldn't be very, real (inaudible) so effectively it was kind of steaks with vodka and that sort of thing.

161.MM: Chicken kiev (laugh)?

162.FC: Yeah, yeah that sort of thing and they had a room called the Natasha Cabinet and which was just a room, type of room with all sort flock wallpaper and this sort of thing and they had (inaudible) bars and they had special vodka. They used to serve borscht, the beetroot soup and this sort of a thing and yeah they did a lot of interesting, he started doing a lot of stuff like herrings and things like that which were more Scandinavian than Russian if you know what I mean. Yeah they made quite a success. They bought the Old Dublin in Francis Street.

163.MM: Now did they buy it or did he buy it?

164.FC: They bought it and he went in as their manager there and then he bought it.

165.MM: And what been in the Old Dublin prior to that. Had it been a restaurant?

166.FC: No, I think it was just shop.

167.MM: Probably antiques or something.

168.FC: As far as I know. I don't think it was a pub either. It wasn't a restaurant anyway. And then he opened up effectively Chapter One before the current guys took it over. Yeah, yeah and now he's up in Cavan I think.

169.MM: Swift Foods isn't it.

170.FC: Swift Foods that's right yeah. Good guy, very, very good guy. And he's a guy that pushed the boundaries quite a bit I think you know both in terms of how food is prepared and that and also I suppose in terms of introducing Scandinavian cooking and that kind of a thing and that kind of Russian cooking.

171.MM: And these boys who owned the Grey Door, they went on to do something else didn't they?

172.FC: They converted the Hibernian and then they bought a hotel in Clare somewhere. Now I don't know exactly what they do now. I don't know. They were in and out of a lot of things put it that way.

173.MM: Where did Guilbaud's then came in mid, early sort of '80s?

174.FC: 1987 was it? (note: Guilbauds opened in 1981)

175.MM: I think it was even earlier than that. I think they were here slightly earlier than that '85 maybe I think or something like that.

176.FC: And there's a couple of interesting things about that. One, it was the first purpose built restaurant to be built in Dublin for ages. Like it was built as a restaurant and of course he had good backers and he (laugh) created, no doubt he created a sensation and he introduced *nouvelle cuisine* and stuck to his guns and created a huge controversy over the small portions and the style and what was all this food, you'd need to go and have your dinner after it. He was expensive but a new generation was growing up that was interested in food and was interested in nutrition and he initially he know he wasn't a kind of a corporate place. The foodies went to him very much. He wasn't, I mean he was expensive without being ordinary much even in real terms I think he was cheaper than he is now you know. But he created a sensation there's no doubt about it and (inaudible) I think eventually he had to increase portion sizes. He was excessive of (inaudible) about cuisine style. But everything but what he brought to Ireland because in that kind of intervening period between you know the height of *haute cuisine* and when he arrived standards had fallen and there was gradual erosion of skill in the dining room and waiters became plate carriers and the whole sommelier's were out of job, there were no sommelier's very much and you know cooking was different and was plated and that sort of a thing and what he did I suppose was he certainly brought back craftsmanship and very high standard, meticulous preparation of every dish that ever went out and consistency and he raised the bar there's no doubt about it. What Myrtle Allen did for kind of Irish cuisine he did for professional restaurant operation in Ireland because he introduced a standard. It was way higher than anybody else at the time and persevered with it. There's no doubt about it.

177.MM: It would have been, he would have come in at a higher level say than Arbutus or were Arbutus doing it at the time.

178.FC: Well you see they were in two different markets. What Arbutus more went down you know, went down more the, they began to blend, as his cooking began to blend the *nouvelle cuisine* with Irish dishes so they began to introduce things like crubeens and black puddings and things like that down there but he never did is a French restaurant out and out and so I suppose he was on a different level. He was also a different market. It was a affluent market in Dublin and that sort of thing. But you know he wasn't all that popular for a long time there's no doubt about it you know but he gradually did get there and won Michelin stars.

179.MM: That just reminds me actually because you're talking about the black pudding which reminds me of Michael Clifford.

180.FC: Michael Clifford.

181.MM: Michael Clifford was in Whites on the Green?

182.FC: Which was again another pioneering restaurant. It was White, he was an auctioneer and he had a lot of property and he liked eating in France and that and decided that Dublin needed a good French restaurant and I think he was impressed by Guilbaud and he got Michael Clifford started producing some amazing food there, there's no doubt about it.

183.MM: Do you remember where Michael Clifford had been prior to that?

184.FC: He was educated in Rockwell. He was in Rockwell school. Where was he now? I think he was in Galway somewhere.

185.MM: But he hadn't trained abroad or anything like do you know?

186.FC: He did spend some time abroad. He was in London. I think he might have been with something like the Ritz or the Savoy or something like that in London. He did some training, he

also worked a bit in France and I think then he was over in the west of Ireland but he came on the scene here and for the short time that he was there he was fantastic. But he had problems as well and the restaurant had problems. He'd produce black pudding with stewed apples.

187.MM: He opened up his own place down in Cork?

188.FC: He did. He moved on down to Cork which was disaster.

189.MM: It was brilliant first?

190.FC: It was a disaster business.

191.MM: But himself and Colin O'Daly were quite similar in that they both seemed to have a good restaurant and they moved in search of something bigger and then the business never followed or whatever?

192.FC: Both of them made the fatal mistake of borrowing much too much money. Colin was conned into putting in a kitchen that would have fed five hundred people and brining his own specially imported cooking equipment in and being largely ripped off by his suppliers but the overall cost was astronomical and Michael was the same. But his expense was in the building, he leased an entire building and he just couldn't fill it. And it was a pity. And he was a bit ahead of his time in Cork too and Cork wasn't Dublin you know it was as simple as that.

193.MM: That's the building that now houses Café Paradiso isn't it.

194.FC: Yeah that's right. So I don't know if any of that is any help.

195.MM: No it's great. I'm trying to think if we've missed anyone along the way there, you know what I mean?

196.FC: Well Colin you've mentioned. They were kind of pioneers.

197.MM: So sort of after this then when Colin comes in and?

198.FC: Conrad Gallagher of course.

199.MM: Oh that's later. Colin comes in at the time then that sort of Alan O'Reilly is in Clarets and Kevin Thornton up in the...

200.FC: They were a bit after.

201.MM: They're sort of the late '80s. Gallagher comes in then the late '90s?

202.FC: I'm just trying to think now. Well there was a number of very good restaurants opened around West Cork. I mean one place that's well worth mentioned was the place Ahakista, Shiro.

203.MM: That was Japanese?

204.FC: Owned by the a German (inaudible) pilot and his Japanese wife and it's a fabulous story which I wrote into Hotel and Catering Review. The name of the guy escapes me now but he was a Japanese, or say he was German and he was put out of business twice by wars and he had two different professions. I think he was a tailor or something first, I'm not too sure and then the Russians invaded and he was, I don't know captured and then he became a (inaudible) pilot and then he ended up, I think he was in the jewellery business. He ended up on the wrong side of the wall and then escaped into West Berlin and set-up in business again. She was a Japanese photography student and she was hitch hiking her way around Europe and she met him and he was

twenty years, thirty years, twenty-five years older than her I think and anyway they hit it off and he decided he wanted to get out of Germany. And they started living around Europe, anywhere and he arrived one day in Shannon on a wet kind of day and hired a car and drove down around Kerry, West Cork and found this Georgian house for sale and called her up and said look this is I think the ideal place and she loved it. And they came over and they set-up house and they had to make a living, and she said well I can cook (laugh). And he said okay and I can wait on tables and they started a Japanese restaurant and there were only two tables. They could only have eight people at some stage and then they got a third table and they were cooking incredible beautiful Japanese food and then most unusually they got a visit from a Michelin inspector. They didn't even know who he was, another French man as far as they were concerned and low and behold they were other people came. They got a Michelin star. Now to get a Michelin star for a Japanese restaurant with eight places or twelve places in the back of County Cork was so unusual as to be unbelievable wasn't it? When you think of the amount of money that a lot of restaurants and the effort they put in.

205.MM: And they couldn't get it?

206.FC: And he was telling me. I went down to interview him shortly after he got the Michelin star and he was telling the story. He said I didn't know, we never go into town or anything like that he said. Suddenly he said the phone ringing (laugh) a lot and we were getting all these bookings and I said to my wife this is very strange. He said we can't take all these bookings anyway and we sort of said well could you ring us back next week or next month or something like that. They were like that. They would open the restaurant and once they had enough money made to keep them going for the following week they'd close. So they were closing weekends. They were very eccentric. But anyway they wanted to find out what all this fuss was about (laugh).

207.MM: Why they were getting so much business yeah?

208.FC: And someone told them that they were in the Michelin Guide and he said what' that? And they said it was a famous French restaurant guide. Is that right? says he. And he said where could we get it? Oh I said you'd probably get it in Eason's so the following week I think he went in to either Tralee or Cork to buy something for the house. He went to Eason's and he got this book (laugh) and he couldn't find himself in it (laugh).

209.MM: Yeah I know the way it's done out.

210.FC: And they were looking up and down these pages (laugh) and it meant nothing to them, nothing at all. They're a good story. If you have the files of Hotel and Catering Review. They're in it yeah. Wait till I see is there anybody that's outstanding. Blairs Cove.

211.MM: Oh Blairs Cove in Durrus?

212.FC: Ernie Evans. Maybe Gert Maes in Killarney.

213.MM: Ah Gaby's yeah.

214.FC: But he's an interesting guy in that he kind of broke the mould in Killarney which at kind of very bad food. Irene Maes, Pearse father that started the business and he the first real upmarket restaurant in Killarney and they served very, very good seafood and that sort of thing and he was also very much a pioneer of introducing you know good value wines and that sort of a thing and that you wouldn't that wasn't available. I mean was he a pioneer in that sense. To some extent I suppose she was but not on the same level now as Myrtle Allen or any of the others really you've been talking about.

215.MM: I'm just thinking maybe see Dublin. Kelly's in Rosslare?

- 216.**FC:** I mean definitely broke the mould I mean in terms of a complete package but also in terms of the quality of the food and the quality of everything that they did and way ahead of their time.
- 217.**MM:** Bill married a French woman didn't he?
- 218.**FC:** He did yeah. I know they definitely maintained the standard but I'm just thinking for hotel food outside of Ireland they raised the bar. They definitely did.
- 219.**MM:** Now hotel food, you still had the Moira and Jury's Dame Street. Were they still there when you were around?
- 220.**FC:** Well the Moira, the top league was the Gresham, the Shelbourne, the Hibernian and the Russell. And the next league was Jury's, the Moira, the Wicklow I suppose and the Central too had a reasonably good name for food then.
- 221.**MM:** How about the Dolphin?
- 222.**FC:** And another interesting thing that nearly all the good restaurants then were in hotels. Yeah, you'd be hard put to find a good restaurant in a hotel now.
- 223.**MM:** Do you remember the Dolphin?
- 224.**FC:** I do just about. But that was on its last legs when I came to Dublin. It was pretty run down.
- 225.**MM:** And was the other place there, maybe that had shut down, there was a place the Palace steak house, the Palace restaurant actually not far from here at the side of Cathedral Street near the Grand...
- 226.**FC:** No.
- 227.**MM:** Ah that was probably closed by that stage as well.
- 228.**FC:** There was a place called the, what was the name of it, it was kind of a popular steak house, it wasn't the Grass Hopper, something like that or the Green Rooster.
- 229.**MM:** The Green Rooster yeah on O'Connell Street. And there was the Green Tureen, which was the Shang Mahangi up in Harcourt Street.
- 230.**FC:** That's right yeah. The Green Rooster was kind of down.You know there was another very interesting place that opened up in the mid '70s I suppose and it was up in Grafton Street and...
- 231.**MM:** Captain Americas now is it?
- 232.**FC:** No, no. Captain Americas was also a pioneer in a kind of, this place did incredibly unusual food like Hawaiian salads and all of this. I can't remember the name it. It was a very kind trendy kind of place to go on Saturdays. They used to kind of cater for families and that sort of a thing but everything was desperately colourful I seem to remember and it was all light kind of stuff. It was salads and lots of as I said kind of Hawaiian kind of food and kind of colourful cocktails and this sort of thing. It was this guys name.
- 233.**MM:** Solomon Grundy's was it?

- 234.**FC:** No that was in Wicklow Street. That came along after the Wicklow Hotel.
- 235.**MM:** That's Casper and Gambini's wasn't it straight after the Wicklow.
- 236.**FC:** If it comes to me I'll...
- 237.**MM:** John O'Byrne they opened up Dobbins. Was that more of a club?
- 238.**FC:** It started out as it ended when he died I suppose. It was a (inaudible) but it was an alternative, it did attract a lot of journalists and the PR people liked it and the food was always...
- 239.**MM:** A lot of the political, or the political party headquarters were close in Mount Street and stuff?
- 240.**FC:** Yeah I mean it was very popular. I think the menu didn't change very much from the time John took it over to the time he died really. And they had their own specialties and they had very good wines always. And that was, the other interesting thing though is you know the growth of kind, when self service I don't know if you're getting into that kind of area.
- 241.**MM:** No they reckoned a lot of people I've spoken to and it would be interesting your opinions on it.
- 242.**FC:** Buffets.
- 243.**MM:** They spoke about PV Doyle and put in that he sort of changed everything from their perspective to the worse because he got rid of service and he got rid of that trained...
- 244.**FC:** He started introducing buffets and that sort of a thing. But the thing about that were the buffets were seen as being very trendy and fashionable when they came in first and PV Doyle and Jury's as well were doing them and you paid.

End of Tape, End of Interview